

PURPLE FRINGED ORCHID.

Orchid, my orchid, if I make a doll
Of many words, wood mirrors dark speech
And with a purple "Love" alone alight,
A poem all of gloaming monody
That leads through glimmering leafage of grave
Thought
Unto one very blossom in the dusk;
My orchid, if I shut you in my heart
Nor rob the hemlock twilight of its star,
Whom none but lovers find, and who finds none
But lovers, since the time and long before
The Charles's foot upon the mossy stone
Passed you contemptuous, as the meadow flower
Now passing idly notes and nothing is;
My orchid, if I give your scent a voice
Strange as the sphinx's riddle, how your flower
Is human and inhuman, part of man
And indubitably apart from man, who plucks,
But cannot take your beauty when he goes,
Who brought your beauty with him when he
Came.
O orchid, purple cloud of winged stars!
O purple crown and sweetness of the dark
Spirits, in habit this dust of speech
And rise up living at its somber heart
To end thy monody with a "Love!"
It is all made of grace and fantasy,
All made of fragrance and of purple air;
It is all made of death for life to be;
Find it who can, and how he finds beware.
—Joseph Russell Taylor in Scribner's Magazine.

MELINDA'S
WEDDING.

When Melinda Wiggins got engaged to Pelig Jenks, her ma was just tickled to death. Beaus was scarce down to Punkinville, for none of the young men would stay after they were grown up. Besides, Pelig is real forehanded and quite a catch.

His ma was not ag'in his marryin at all, and Melinda she wouldn't never hev caught him if she hadn't took airly mornin walks 'bout the time he went over to his place of business and met him as ef by accident.

I am told that he proposed by Taggart's barn and was excepted in front of the shoemaker's and gave Melinda her engagement ring jest this side of the blacksmith's.

Well, Mrs. Wiggins she was real set up about it, and she said that Melinda should be dressed up as much as any bride there ever had been in Punkinville, ef 'ot a little better. But Mr. Wiggins, Melinda's pa, he come of a close family, and he was near himself—'twas his nater to be—and when Melinda's ma asked him for money to shop for the things he jest buttoned up his pockets and said, "Naw." He others pronounced no that way when he was sot. "Naw," sez he, "I ain't tolled and motted forty odd year fur to let my money be spent like water. You kin make a list out of what is wanted, and I'll get it."

Well, when he spoke up like that Mrs. Wiggins she knew 'twasn't no good talkin, so she said, "I'll rap you air right, pa," and she wrote down some things and kinder winked across to Melinda, who was beginning to cry at the idea of her pa, that didn't know caliker from blankets, a-choosin her weddin clothes.

The help saw all that and heered what was said and nat'ally told folks. Well, that afternoon Mr. Wiggins went to town to sell his potatoes and got the money and come down on the boat as usual.

The boat land is in quite a lonesome place, and he went home by a sort of side path anyway, and just about dusk the Browns heard a howlin in the picnic woods and, goin to see what it was, there was old Wiggins tied to a tree.

He told 'em he'd been beset by robbers and that they was so fierce and furious he'd been obliged to give 'em every cent he had. He described 'em as most outlandish critters. He said their hair was like cotton wool and their faces black. Their hats was tied on with big handkerchiefs, and they was queer and slopy in the small of their backs. Their hands and feet was sort of small and skinny looking, and they had blue overalls and linen dusters on. He said 'twasn't their strength that overcome him, but their bein so spooky and supernaturallike. And one of 'em said in a hoarse voice, "Little you know who we be," and the other: "We're takin your money because you don't provide as you should for solemn occasions. Beware in future!"

When he got home, he cried and said he wished he'd giv Mrs. Wiggins the money for Melinda's things, but she said it happened fortunate that her sister, Melinda's aunt, had sent her a present fur her weddin.

The help now, she don't think them robbers was supernatural, and she sez if ever Mr. Wiggins finds out the truth she dunno what will happen to Mrs. Wiggins. I kinder think myself that the robbers was Mrs. Wiggins and Melinda dressed up in some old clothes, with cotton batting wigs, and I don't blame 'em.

Well, Melinda had her clothes after all, but before they was finished Mr. Wiggins he'd got over his skeer and got as mean as ever again, and he wouldn't give his onfortunate wife nothin extry for the supper. She borried The Tide of Fashion from the Rabbits and found out that she'd order hev chik'n-salad.

But Mr. Wiggins, he said, he was sellin his chickens, not devourin 'em, hum, and I suppose what she had done before kinder weakened poor Mrs. Wiggins' conscience, for, seen her own coops was locked up, the poor soul went around to the neighbors and stole one chicken apiece from each of us. It was kinder just to do it that way when she might have took 'em all from one of us, and those of us that caught her at it made up our minds not to say nuthin, but jest to pray fur her, and we'd sent over word that ef there was anything we could do to call on us. And perhaps she felt we'd be willin to spare 'he chickens, but was proud about askin fur 'em.

Well, she got the things together somehow, and she cooked the chickens and made the salad and borried chany of most of us and got up a real fust

rate supper and sot the table with flowers. They was mostly margyolds and old man, and some folks don't like the smell of neither, but the yellor and green looked pretty, and it was all ready for the company when they cum hum from church.

We that knowed things felt that we could see marks of innard torture on poor Mrs. Wiggins' face, and we felt to sympathize, fur she was nat'ally a moral woman and a pious one, and she'd been driven to sin by the meanness of her pardner. You see, she was one of them women—that lives fur their children. Ef she'd been a pelican, she'd hev took all the feathers out of her buzzin to make 'em beds, and she'd sackerified herself fur Melinda. She looked kinder better when she got to church, but our minister he was young and hadn't married nobody before, and bein nervous, he commenced fur to read the burial service instead of the marriage service, and we bein all stiff with horrer, hadn't presence of mind enough fur to stop him until he'd actilly buried Melinda as fur as words could go, and Mrs. Wiggins was in high strikes.

However, she got over 'em, and the minister he said he didn't know after all but it was a providence to keep us from bein too sot on the things of this world and reminded how short life was and went back and married 'em proper. And so we did get back to Wiggins', only, Mr. Wiggins hev been too mean to get the wagin mended, the wheel come off, and they was all split out and enamost drowned goin over Stabside bridge that ain't got no rallin. Mrs. Wiggins, poor dear, was soaked, and when we tuk her into our wagin she kept sayin, "Jedgments—jedgments—jedgments is comin!" We knowed what she was thinkin of, and we tried to cheer her up.

Well, when the folks was dried and dressed over we all went to supper, and we praised it up as much as we could, but Mrs. Wiggins sot down in her place like a ghost, and folks began to talk and laugh and help everything. But she didn't smile.

She passed the chicken salad plates to the help, and the help gav 'em to the folks, and we all tasted it, but it didn't relish. Still we tried to eat it fur her sake. Most of us done it, too, and the coffee was good, and we cheered up some. Mrs. Wiggins didn't eat no salad herself, so she didn't know how it tasted. After supper we all went in to the parlor and sot around, and St Barker was tryin to git up dancin, and I did hope things would end happy, when all of a sudden folks began to look pale and say they was p'isoned. So they seemed to be. One arter the other was took sick, and they all said the same thing—it was the salad. I felt very poorly myself, and so did my Obediah. The minister had gone home sick, and there was a regular panic. There was one doctor there, and he sent fur another, and old Miss Peebles said it was like old cholera times. It was awful, anyway, but jest as we was at the wust, we ladies lyn about in the up stairs rooms expectin to die and feelin sure it was arsenic. Mrs. Wiggins appeared amongst us.

"Friends and feller sinners," she said, "we air all on the p'nt of death, and here, before you all, I make confession. I am a thief and a robber, and I shall never be pardoned. It was me that robbed my husband, and, more than that, I stole the chickens to make the salad—one of 'em from each of my good friends and neighbors. Jedgments has fallen!"

"You was driv to it, Mrs. Wiggins," sez I, "by your pardner's meanness. We all knowed it, and none of us blame you."

"You don't know all," said Mrs. Wiggins. "More'n that, I went to the store and tuk my chances and stole a bottle of lie. The recipe said to make the salad dressin with lie. I'd never made none. I stole the bottle. Oh, I shan't never be forgiven, I shan't never be forgiven! I tuk a bottle of p'ison of some sort, fur it was in the drug department where lies is kept, and I'm a murderer!"

"Oh, ho!" says the doctor. "Bring me the bottle, Mrs. Wiggins, and I guess I'll find out how to cure 'em."

Mrs. Wiggins fetched it; doctor he tasted it.

"This ain't p'ison, ladies," sez he. "There ain't no great harm done, only I don't suppose the recipe mentioned castor oil for salad dressing. 'Tisn't usual anyhow. Nobody is goin to die this time. Mrs. Wiggins, unless it is you yourself. You lie down and quiet yourself."

Poor Mrs. Wiggins, she dropped on her knees and prayed right there fur thankfulness, and we all jined in, and as soon as folks knowed they hadn't tuk arsenic they all got better. Mrs. Wiggins' solemn and distracted looks and her not eatin any had made them that wotn't in the secret think that she'd gone crazy and done it a-purpose, which scared 'em more.

And they do say Mr. Wiggins ain't quite so near as he used to be since he saw what might come of drivin a woman into a corner for want of a penny.

Still, we shan't forget Melinda Wiggins' wedding in a hurry, those of us that went to it.

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